INTRO [OUR THESIS]: (1) context affects values expressed in texts, (2) both texts about love, (3) EBB power of authentic love AND based on real, (4) TGG also power of love BUT undermined by (a) projection not a person AND (b) failed ideals of American Dream

Social, cultural and historical contexts intersect with a composer's personal milieu and affect how texts are valued at their time and later. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "Songs from the Portuguese" (1849) and F Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby (1926) both explore the dynamic nature of love. Intensely personal and not intended for publication, Browning's Sonnets express a love that is devoted, passionate and spiritual but is firmly rooted in the reality of a reciprocal developing relationship. Jay Gatsby's expression of love is also idealised and devoted to the point of obsession in his quest for his beloved Daisy Buchanan. However, Fitzgerald, writing in the aftermath of WW1, reveals a love that is tragically futile [or flawed] because, unlike Browning, it is based on a projection, not a real person, and the possibilities of authentic love are corrupted by the failed ideals of the American Dream.

FIRST BODY PARAGRAPH - AUTHENTIC LOVE EXPRESSED BY EBB

Just as love takes many forms in real human experience, so it is variously represented by composers. Authentic or 'real' love is based on shared intimacy, with attributes of mutual acceptance and trust. It is powerful and transforming. Browning's Sonnets can be understood through her personal circumstances and her Victorian context of the 1840s. Browning, six years Robert's junior, an invalid and with a controlling, restrictive father, believed a loving relationship to be extremely unlikely. She was sustained by her strong Methodist faith and classical education, both evident in her poems. Although great social change was occuring through industrialisation, Victorian attitudes towards women were restrictive. Patriarchal social values meant women had few legal rights with property and wealth in marriage; pragmatic attitudes to courtship and marriage emphasised economic and social advantage rather than emotional integrity. Open acknowledgement of emotion and sexuality tended to be repressed. In this background, Browning's sonnets both celebrated the transforming power of authentic, shared love but also subverted and challenged some Victorian values towards women, courtship and loving relationships. Even her chosen form of the 16th century Petrarchan sonnet undermined literary gender expectations: typically written by men about unattainable love, with women as hyperbolised models of perfection and inspiration, Browning used this form to express deep love and passion wherein the woman was an equal partner.